Reading the Tatler in 1710

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Reading the *Tatler* in 1710: Polite Print and the Spalding Gentlemen's Society[1]

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I. Introduction

The Spalding Gentlemen's Society (hereafter SGS), a much-cited exemplar of eighteenth-century learned sociability which celebrated its 300th anniversary in 2010, famously began with the communal reading of the *Tatler* in 1710, and achieved definitive memorialization in 1812 in vol. VI of John Nichols's *Literary Anecdotes*.[2] Yet given the association of SGS with two such landmark publications, it is surprising that the nature and significance of these connections with polite print still remain largely unexplored. This paper therefore poses the question of exactly how these connections worked, and asks how a new understanding of the process and agencies involved might bear on our wider understanding of the familiar – perhaps over-familiar – SGS story. Far from simply starting with the *Tatler*'s arrival in Spalding and concluding with Nichols's incorporation of SGS material into *Literary Anecdotes*, what is going on here is both more complex and less transparent than such a model of circulation from capital to regions and back again might suggest. By examining both regional contexts and textual transmission, the present paper shows how the involvement of SGS with polite print worked to promote particular and sometimes conflicting visions of desirable sociability.

The paper thus begins by focusing on the founding narrative that links the origins of SGS to the *Tatler*, mapping the outlook and priorities of SGS and its members in relation to the values and prescriptions so gracefully advanced in Steele's watershed

periodical. SGS was rooted in the established dynamism of an economically vibrant Lincolnshire town that enjoyed strategic access to the communication infrastructure of the Great North Road and the trading networks of the East Coast ports, and was buoyed up over generations by major investment in fenland drainage; but this situation was not without associated difficulties. Spalding's fenland setting still placed it at a considerable distance from London's cultural, financial, and administrative centers; it inherited from the seventeenth century a bitter history of religious division and social dispossession; and the influx of aspiring professionals alongside traditional elites made appropriate modes of sociability a key concern. The cultural connectedness and prosperity of Spalding at this time do, however, suggest that the *Tatler* is less likely to have been welcomed as a unique and transformatory intervention than as a congenial supplement to regional sociability. As to the *Tatler*'s specific local relevance, while its key projections (bearing on London's relation to the regions, on religion, on politics, and on the improving potential of conversation) do indeed have resonance for SGS and its region, there are also tensions and divergences.[3] Some underline the wider scale of the challenges that Steele confronted in persuading the nation to polite modernity, and others relate to underlying differences within the gentry and professions about the specific directions that sociable improvement should take. Although Steele's programme engaged in potentially supportive ways with many issues facing SGS, this paper will show that it was ultimately an area of disagreement between SGS and the *Tatler*, namely the Society's commitment to science and antiquarianism, that facilitated its incorporation into Nichols's *Literary Anecdotes*. An associated issue (which would be resolved only at the beginning of the twenty-first century) focused on the restriction of SGS membership to men. These two issues, both of

which highlight the potential for tension between SGS and *Tatler* agendas, underline the need for a critical appraisal of the relationship between the two projects, for both were shaped by groups and individuals with important and sometimes conflicting interests at stake.

To begin at what presents as the beginning, even SGS's initial connection with the *Tatler* has been principally known from the 1812 report in *Literary Anecdotes*; but the testimony itself, with its strategic deployment of the reputation of Steele and his periodical, is very much older. It was first composed by the SGS founder, Maurice Johnson (1688–1755), as part of a "Historical Account of the State of Learning in Spalding, Elloe, Holland, Lincolnshire" intended as an introduction to the Minute Books. Thirty years after Johnson's death it was published by John Nichols in no. 20 of Richard Gough's *Bibliotheca Britannica Topographica* (1784); and in 1812 it was reprinted in Nichols's *Literary Anecdotes*:

> In April, 1709, that great genius, Capt. Richard Steele, afterwards made a knight, and supervisor of the playhouses, published the *Tatlers*, which, as they came out in half-sheets, were taken in by a gentleman, who communicated them to his acquaintances at the Coffee-house then in the Abbey-yard; and these papers being universally approved, as both instructive and entertaining, they ordered them to be sent down thither, with the *Gazette* and *Votes*, for which they paid out of charity to the person who kept the coffee-house; and they were accordingly had and read there ever[y] post-day, generally aloud to the company, who could sit and talk over the subject afterwards. This insensibly drew the men of sense and letters into a sociable way of conversing; and continued the next year, 1710, until the

> publication of these papers desisted; which was in December, to their great regret, whose thoughts being by these means bent towards their own improvement in knowledge, they again in like manner heard some of the *Tatlers* read over, and now and then a poem, letter, or essay, on some subjects in polite literature.[4]

This richly suggestive passage is particularly interesting in its elision of authorial agency, for there is ample evidence to confirm that Johnson himself, eldest son of a landowning family based at Ayscoughfee Hall in Spalding, is the tactfully self-effacing "gentleman" who first introduces the *Tatler*, and that he has prepared the ground before the coach even arrives. After education at Spalding Free Grammar School and at Eton, Johnson had entered on legal training in London, joining the Society of the Inner Temple in 1705, and was called to the bar in 1710 (*Corr. SGS*, x). In London he became deeply committed to learned and literary sociability, meeting antiquaries such as William Stukeley, Roger Gale, and his brother Samuel Gale, and taking a major role in working towards the refoundation of the Society of Antiquaries.[5] Like Stukeley and other future members of SGS, Johnson was probably also a freemason (*Corr. SGS*, 101). In addition, he associated less formally with writers such as Joseph Addison, John Gay, Alexander Pope, and Richard Steele.[6] Alongside these sociable and learned interests, he was active as a land-steward, and discharged high-profile official roles in and around Spalding as chairman of the local Commission of Sewers (responsible for the maintenance of fenland drainage), deputy recorder of Stamford, chairman of the South Holland quarter sessions, and justice of the peace.[7]

Johnson in fact attributed to Steele the original idea of founding SGS, and recorded that he had also discussed his project with others in Steele's London circle.[8] As

he deploys the association in his origin story, the gentlemen's approval of the *Tatler* as "instructive and entertaining" and their aspiration to "improvement in knowledge" and a miscellaneous engagement with "polite literature" construct a particular social constituency and cultural ambition for his project; and the original function of the piece as a preface to the Minute Books is a reminder of the key role that rhetoric, as well as record-keeping, plays in the formation of archives as well as published collections. Johnson conjures a society of gentlemen, interested in parliamentary business and government appointments, whose responsibilities bring them "ever[y] post-day" to await the arrival of "the *Gazette* and *Votes*" in the coffee house, and who, as befits their rank, pay for periodicals as an act of "charity" to the proprietor. SGS membership lists, however, tend somewhat to qualify this picture, confirming the specific prominence of the professionals who in Clive Holmes's words "acted as 'brokers', channeling the products of the national culture into the localities".[9] Lawyers and clergy (the latter constituting by Rosemary Sweet's calculation the largest occupational group in SGS, nearly a quarter of the membership between 1712 and 1760) were key constituencies, as were surveyors and civil engineers attracted by the region's investment in fenland drainage (compare Sweet's contention that "the most active antiquaries came from the ranks of the lesser gentry and those who merged with the professional classes").[10]

Politeness, unsurprisingly, looms much larger, both in the *Tatler* and in this founding narrative of the SGS, than its underpinning basis in wealth and the work that produces it (*Minute-Books*, ed. Owen, vii–viii). Johnson emphasizes how "insensibly" the gentlemen were drawn into improving activities in the relaxed setting of the coffee house: in Peter Clark's view, "Clubs were . . . umbilically linked to the arrival of coffee-houses", which

in Johnson's quasi-Habermasian description replace the Gothic institutions of monasticism in almost symbolic succession.[11] Yet the extraordinary efforts that Johnson put into strategy, correspondence, and record-keeping for SGS belie any implication of the merely casual.[12] This occluded relationship between strategic effort and easy but improving conversation itself presents a significant parallel with the *Tatler*, whose politely ingratiating style, projected through the persona of the beguilingly eccentric Isaac Bickerstaff, was the effect of a gruelling commitment to articulating, to thrice-weekly deadlines, a view of life attractively but inexplicitly aligned with a modernizing Whig ideology on Revolution principles.[13] Johnson, however, aimed not only to combine amusement with improvement, but also, and more specifically, to build an active knowledge exchange that brought together the intellectual and social energies of educated men across Lincolnshire and beyond. Lincoln, Peterborough, Stamford, Boston, Oundle, Wisbech, Ancaster, and Market Deeping were singled out as prospective bases, and some of these towns and cities had societies actually founded; but these sister-societies generally proved relatively short-lived (*Corr. SGS*, xv–xvi). It was SGS, animated by Johnson's direct and tireless personal supervision, that proved most successful and sustainable; and by the end of the century it would be celebrated in print as a beacon of improving sociability. SGS and its members evidently shared many of the *Tatler*'s aspirations, and Steele's programme demonstrably chimed with particular local challenges and concerns, but, as already noted, there were also tensions and difficulties. These not only suggest something of the sheer scale of the *Tatler*'s reforming ambition, but also hint at significant disparities between the visions of improvement embraced by Steele and those that animated SGS.

II. London and the Regions

Johnson's canvassing on behalf of the SGS project articulates his home town's relation to the capital in terms at once confidently ambitious and rhetorically self-deprecating. The latter strain, evident in Johnson's picture of the gentlemen waiting for the London mail that brought them the *Tatler*, should not be taken too literally, for SGS was an energetic and well-connected group, by no means as dependent on the importation of town politeness and culture as Johnson's rhetoric might suggest. Steele, rather than converting them to modern politeness by sheer force of his ingenious urbanity, presented in the *Tatler* a focus that local aspirations were already primed to embrace (and Johnson also records that he had already concerted his plans for SGS with Steele and his circle at Button's coffee house in London, making it clear that there was nothing accidental about the reading of Steele's essays that was made the occasion of founding the Society).[14]

Nevertheless, a rhetoric of rustic isolation flattering to London-based correspondents could still be useful. In a letter of 1712 to the Spalding-born London surgeon Dr Edward Green he contrasts "the Inhospitable Fens" with London's "Living learned World" only to promote his plans for consolidating social and intellectual capital:

> [I] write to you in favour of a Laudable Designe which Wee in the Inhospitable Fens have formed for our Improvement in Literature & the passing our Lives with more Comfort I mean a Clubb or Society of Gentlemen of all the Learned Professions who meet every Monday And would esteem It a singular favour from You Sr, who are a Part of the living learned World not the lest distinguished if You would be pleased to spare a Quarter of an houre twice or thrice in a Yeare for the communicating to Us any of the many thousand occurrences in any part of

> Learning which You (who are every day conversant in all Parts of It) shall think fit (*Corr*. *SGS*, 3–4, 227).

Johnson invokes colonial comparisons in imaging the fancied potential of the scheme, promising, "Your Letters will more promote Science amongst us Fenn Men, who are thought to labour under a very stupid Air, than the Missionarys from Rome have Religion (truly so calld) mongst the Chinese." Less whimsically, William Bogdani, Clerk to the Ordnance at the Tower of London, congratulated Johnson on "the Success & Progress" of SGS in "A Town separated from the Rest of Mankind" (*Corr*. *SGS*, 41, 224). At one level, this simply recognizes that long-distance travel was indeed a significant undertaking, and that even local travel could be slow and difficult (which early SGS rules acknowledge as a legitimate excuse for occasional non-attendance). Yet the routine endorsements "Turn at Stilton" and "By Caxton Bag" on letters delivered to SGS remind us that Spalding enjoyed a highly effective communications network with London, and with Cambridge and the East.[15] The postal system, whose potential Steele had already mastered as editor of the official *London Gazette* (another of the publications received at the Spalding coffee house), was indeed integral to his plan for the *Tatler*: by publishing "*every* Tuesday, Thursday, *and* Saturday, *in the Week, for the Convenience of the Post*" he caught the post going out from London, facilitating a regional as well as a London circulation (SGS copies arrived, Johnson later recalled, in their original "Single Papers", franked by one of the county MPs).[16] There is also a striking mirroring between Steele's Bickerstaff, who begins his *Tatler* by placing his informants in the various London coffee houses to report on their various departments of news, and Johnson, who gathers the

future members of SGS around him in the Spalding coffee house to receive his friend's new periodical.

The *Tatler* itself early highlights the gentry and professional routines of movement between the regions and London so important to the social reach of men like Johnson. The fictitious Mr Acorn has left rather too long between visits, and comes up to town for the first time in six years only to be flummoxed by slang he can't understand and manners that strike him as rude and incomprehensible (no. 12, *Tatler*, ed. Bond, vol. I.106). This prompts the urbane Mr Friendly both to comfort him and to give him the benefit of his more sophisticated perspective:

> You are to understand, Sir, that Simplicity of Behaviour, which is the Perfection of good Breeding and good Sense, is utterly lost in the World; and in the Room of it, there are started a Thousand little Inventions, with men, barren of better Things, take up in the Place of it.

Mr Friendly's lofty analysis rests on an indispensable knowledge of up-to-date slang and fashions: gentry and professionals who bilocate between London and the provinces, as many of the Spalding elite did at this time, are thus invited to share Mr Friendly's judicious sophistication rather than Mr Acorn's browbeaten bewilderment.

Readers' letters (whether genuine or not), which soon became a feature of the *Tatler*, included news from well beyond London: hyperbolic praise of the *Tatler*'s effect in Oxford, for instance, asserts that "the Manners of our young Gentlemen are in a fair Way of Amendment, and their very Language is mightily refin'd", while "a Friend in the Country" reports some newly arrived expressions "and therefore desires I would explain those Terms, as I have many others, for the Information of such as live at a Distance from

this Town and Court, which he calls the great Mints of Language".[17] Steele comments, "His Letter is dated from *York*; and (if he tells me Truth) a Word in its ordinary Circulation does not reach that City within the Space of Five Years after it is first stamp'd." Such letters certainly enable Steele to develop his commentary on modish language and its moral and aesthetic implications; but what if anything such letters prove about the views of actual readers at a distance is far more elusive. Moreover, the imagery of minting, with its connotations of authority, points, if ambivalently, to a sense in which it is London which confers the stamp of authority, despite Steele's critique of its neologisms.

More substantial in its claims for rural life, and suggestively parallel to Johnson's deployment of the *Tatler* in Spalding, is a letter from the country between "Friends bred . . . to the Knowledge of Books as well as Men", which pays tribute to the *Tatler* as a "fresh Topick of Discourse lately risen amongst the Ingenious in our Part of the World", and requests "a compleat Set, together with your Thoughts of the 'Squire [i.e. Bickerstaff], and his Lucubrations" (no. 89, *Tatler*, ed. Bond, vol. II.58–60). Steele's country readers are thus offered an aspirational model of how to incorporate into their social lives the kinds of discussion that the *Tatler* might support. Further prompts to aspiration are provided in no. 179, where "building and furnishing a Green-House" enables the writer to enjoy winter and summer alike, and to confer the benefit also on family and neighbours: "In this Green-House we often dine, we drink Tea, we dance Country-Dances; and what is the chief Pleasure of all, we entertain our Neighbours in it, and by this Means contribute very much to mend the Climate Five or Six Miles about us" (no. 179, *Tatler*, ed. Bond, vol. III.473–77). While this might "be thought somewhat

extravagant by a great many Gentlemen whose Revenues exceed mine", the writer claims to have spent only what others might spend "in riotous Eating and Drinking, in Equipage and Apparel, upon Wenching, Gaming, Racing, and Hunting". The apparent extravagance is a means to an improving and sociable end, and is in any case relatively affordable in comparison with such pleasures as the writer – and Steele – disdain. Such rural possibilities for enlightened sociability clearly overlap with the benefits that Johnson's SGS would attempt to offer its members and the wider community. For instance, at the end of the War of the Austrian Succession in 1749 Johnson would draft a successful SGS petition for celebrating in improved style: noting the danger of "Sticking up Candles in Windows" and launching "flying fires in a Town which has Twice severely Suffered by fire within these Thirty Six Yeares and wherein many Buildings are covered with Reed", SGS proposed "Erecting a Triumphal Arch upon the Cross, with Safe fireworks therein", which "wee conceive will Yeild more Delight to the Spectators and do more Honour on the Occasion" (*Corr. SGS*, 178–81). The rhetoric combines taste, patriotism, and prudent professionalism, identifying SGS as the agent of responsible modern improvement.

III. Religion

Religious conflict had been particularly bitter in the recent history of Spalding and the fens, and the strategically moderate piety promoted by the *Tatler* had obvious relevance. As Steele demonstrates when he responds to his Tory critics in his final paper, his construction of religious moderation had been a key part of his advocacy of Whig positions based on Revolution principles:

> But what I find is the least excusable Part of all this Work is, That I have, in some Places in it, touched upon Matters which concern both the Church and the State. All I shall say for this is, That the Points I alluded to are such as concerned every Christian and Freeholder in *England*; and I could not be cold enough to conceal my Opinion on Subjects which related to either of those Characters (no. 271, *Tatler*, ed. Bond, vol. I.363).

As to what "concerned every Christian . . . in *England*" during the *Tatler*'s run, in 1709–10 Dr Henry Sacheverell had been found guilty of preaching that the Church was in danger, an implicit condemnation of the Whig administration.[18] The *Tatler* takes an obliquely cool approach, mocking the ladies who took their picnics day by day to hear the proceedings ("it is not to be expressed how many cold Chickens the Fair Ones have eaten since this Day Sevennight for the Good of their Country") – while in Lincolnshire disaffected Tory landowners were "distributing loaves inscribed 'Sacheverell' to the poor", stoking "a popular 'frenzy' to which the whigs attributed their defeat in the shire election".[19] Steele, whimsical at the expense of Sacheverell's high-church Tory supporters, aligns his critique with Whig interests and undercuts any potentially damaging association between Whig origins and puritan parliamentarianism by focusing on freethinking as the common enemy:

> These Apostates, from Reason and good Sense, can look at the glorious Frame of Nature, without paying an Adoration to him that raised it; can consider the great Revolutions in the Universe, without lifting up their Minds to that superior Power which hath the Direction of it; can presume to censure the Deity in his Ways towards Men; can level Mankind with the Beasts that perish; can extinguish in

> their own Minds all the pleasing Hopes of a future State, and lull themselves into a stupid Security against the Terrors of it (no. 135, *Tatler*, ed. Bond, vol. II.280).

Freethinking is similarly a preoccupation for Johnson, who for instance deplores members of the Royal Society "who fantcy themselves not under so great Obligations to the Allwise & ruling Providence of Allmighty God, as to speak of him or hear his Name mencioned with Awe & humble reverence" (*Corr*. *SGS*, 548). Similar resentment, expressed in quarrels between clergy and what Johnson's son Maurice would call "rong headed" medical men, was perceived to have been at the root of the failure of SGS's sister society at Peterborough (*Corr*. *SGS*, 127). Like Steele, the Johnsons laid the blame at the door of the freethinkers.

For the *Tatler* indeed, as for the Johnsons, religion is not a relic of an age of superstition and strife, but the indispensable foundation for polite improvement. In no. 5 Steele gives a suggestive Holy Week puff for Swift's *A Project for the Advancement of Religion*, describing the author as one "whose Virtue sits easy about him, and to whom Vice is throughly contemptible" (no. 5, *Tatler*, ed. Bond, vol. I.47–48). He ends by quoting a comment allegedly made at Will's coffee house, the established haunt, since Dryden's time, of wits and would-be wits: "the Man writes much like a Gentleman, and goes to Heav'n with a very good Mien". There is a striking and perhaps in part satirical indirection in assigning such a comment to a coffee house that would later reach only "the very lowest Mark on the Glass" of Bickerstaff's religious thermometer; and there is also considerable personal irony in relation to Swift, who was soon to turn to the Tories (and quarrel with Steele) in his dismay over the Whigs' desire to repeal the Test Acts that kept dissenters out of political office: in this instance, Swift found himself at the sharp

political end of issues which the *Tatler* preferred to tackle by projecting a politely middle-of-the-road consensus (no. 220, *Tatler*, ed. Bond, vol. III.151). But when Steele's collaborator Addison made Bickerstaff describe his religious thermometer in no. 220, it was given a significant provenance: the Vicar of Bray, "having seen several Successions of his neighbouring Clergy, either burnt or banish'd, departed this Life with the Satisfaction of having never deserted his Flock, and died Vicar of *Bray*" (no. 220, *Tatler*, ed. Bond, vol. III.149). Far from being a figure for self-interested timeserving, the Vicar is here an exemplar of fidelity, avoiding the controversies that terminated the tenures (and in some cases the lives) of neighbouring clergy. Bickerstaff explains that on this barometer "the Church is placed in the Middle Point of the Glass, between *Zeal* and *Moderation*, the Situation in which she always flourishes, and in which every good *Englishman* wishes her who is a Friend to the Constitution of his Country" (no. 220, *Tatler*, ed. Bond, vol. III.150).

All this takes on a particular force in the context of Spalding's experiences of religious turmoil over the preceding century. During the Civil War Spalding was a Parliamentary town in a largely Parliamentary county, with a learned and zealous puritan for its vicar.[20] Robert Ram re-ordered the church of St Mary and St Nicholas for a puritan ministry, turning a room over the north porch into a library (Clarke, 8, 16, 19). Ram also involved himself directly in political publishing, writing in 1643 to advise the Royalist stronghold at neighbouring Croyland to submit to Parliament, and prompting a retaliatory raid in which he and others were captured; but when parliamentary forces retook Croyland, Ram published news of his providential escape.[21] It was, however, after his appointment as chaplain to Colonel Edward Rossiter that he achieved his widest

influence as an army preacher, publishing in 1644 the influential *Soldiers Catechisme* (7 editions by 1645). Here he specifically justified the smashing of images and denounced the Church of England for maintaining "a Popish Prelacie", "an Ignominious Clergie", "the soule-starving Service-Booke", "a companie of stinking Ceremonies", "abominable Monuments of Idolatrie", and "unchristian liberty".[22] His puritan conviction remained firm to the end, and his successor, Robert Peirson, continued in similar vein at the Restoration: Pierson's offences against ecclesiastical discipline were denounced to the Bishop of Lincoln, but he resigned before prosecution could take its course.[23] The complainants, in a striking characterization of the religious and political temper of the town, declared that "a person of soe knowne factious principles (as he all alonge has been) was alltogether unfitt to be continued in such a ffactious Towne and parts as Spalding, and the Nighbouring Country, hath been and to this day are".

Steele's polite vision of Revolution principles had no place for confessional strife such as had characterized the careers of Ram and Peirson. A case in point is his treatment of the Whig populist anti-popery astrologer John Partridge. Steele had taken over from Swift the invented character of Isaac Bickerstaff as author of the *Tatler*; but Bickerstaff had originally been invented, in Swift's *Predictions for the Year 1708*, as mouthpiece for an onslaught on Partridge, whose annual insinuations that the established church was little better than popery were particularly galling to Swift's high-church sensibilities. Partridge was the kind of Whig who could only be an embarrassment to such as Steele, and in the *Tatler* he is deftly depoliticized, cited predominantly as a hopeless predictor of the future, a swindler of the ignorant, and a vendor of ineffective patent medicines.[24] In

Spalding too, militant puritanism was part of a violently controversial heritage that the elites of this improving town were putting quietly to one side.

Johnson's treatment of this past, however, is interestingly ambivalent. He expresses appreciation for Ram, "that diligent pastor", in the specific role of patron and protector of the parish library of St Mary and St Nicholas (whose conservation was the first task to which SGS applied itself), but is silent on his puritanism and his association with the army – a silence of a piece with the SGS ban on discussions of potentially divisive political and religious topics (Nichols, VI.56, 59). There was no controversy, however, about associating the Society with the ecclesiastical parish: SGS celebrations took place in church, and the Reverend Stephen Lyon, licensed to the parish in 1709, became in 1713 the first president of SGS (*Corr. SGS*, xvi). When he died in 1748 his gravestone claimed for him qualities as well adapted to the ecclesiastical ideals of this later age as the puritan zeal of Ram had been to the mid seventeenth century. Lyon is here constructed as a narrowly escaped victim of bigotry and a model of protestant moderation: "a native of France, of the city of Roan, which place he left under the guardianship of his mother, for the sake of the Protestant religion, then persecuted . . . a true lover of the Constitution of England, as it was settled at the Revolution; attached vehemently to no sect or party, an universal lover of mankind".[25] The reader of the slab in the church floor, like the reader of the *Tatler*, is invited to revere such shared ideals as the uncontroversial inheritance of all but a few malcontents.

SGS also testified to its religious moderation by expanding its range of membership well beyond the Anglican mainstream: Catholic SGS member Edward Walpole dedicated to the Society his translation of Sannazaro's *De partu virginis* (1736);

high-church figures such as the two Samuel Wesleys (father and son) and Charles Jennens were members and correspondents; and Johnson corresponded with George Ault, "the Learned . . . Teacher of the Presbyterian Congregation at Boston".[26] Johnson also encouraged an application for membership by the fossil specialist Emanuel Mendes da Costa (1717–91), whose roots lay in London's Portuguese Jewish community (*Corr. SGS*, 168–9, 233). In addition, the West African Islamic scholar Ayuba Suleiman Diallo, whom Johnson met after he had been redeemed from slavery and taken up by London society, won his particular admiration: "He was an Open, Candid, humane & Good man Spake English well enough to be understood, was Skilful in and wrote Arabic well & fast or very readily And Six other Eastern languages . . . he could repeat the whole Alchoran mementer, & so thrice Wrote it Over here" (*Corr. SGS*, 81–83). Johnson quickly convened a committee of London-based SGS members to propose him for membership, and Diallo accepted, further extending the Society's advocacy of a sociability that transcended some, if not all, of the confessional divisions of its time.

IV. Politics

Clark suggests that in a period when party faction was liable to disrupt national and civic government, a ban on political discussion, or a restriction on membership to one party only, may have been the effective alternatives for ensuring a society's harmonious conduct (Clark, 180–81). The path taken by SGS, for which breadth of membership was a key aspiration, was emphatically the former: like religion, the subject was banned, as in Johnson's view, "politics . . . would throw us all into confusion and disorder" (*Corr. Stukeley/Johnson*, 95); and party politics was likewise a key topic that Steele sought to

play down in the *Tatler* (Nichols, VI.6–7). However, Johnson's memorial of how he had originally discussed his plans for the Society with Steele and others at Button's coffee house dates it, significantly, to a very particular moment in the development of the politics of the age, a moment when sociability across party lines may have seemed much more feasible than it was to become soon afterwards:

> the Hint was taken and pursued from Conversations with Secretary Addyson, Sir Richard Steele, Laur. Eu[s]den now the Poet Laurat, Mr Alexander Pope the Poet, Col. Brett, Mr Jn Gay & other Gentlemen at their Clubb at Buttons Coffee house in Cavent Garden London by me M. Johnson.[27]

Addison's literary circle at Button's did indeed include, in its early stages, the poets Alexander Pope and John Gay, who would later be associated with specifically Tory writing and, later still, with the opposition to Walpole. Pope, after his falling-out with Addison, would cite his manipulative influence over the "little Senate" at Button's in lines that ultimately became the portrait of Atticus in *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*; but Johnson, significantly, reconstructs the group at a point before this division of the ways, a point before the political implications of Addison and Steele's Whig programme had become divisively explicit.[28]

Yet the period of the *Tatler*'s run saw conflict not only over Sacheverell but also over the War of the Spanish Succession, and the political art of the *Tatler* emerged impressively in its ability to inculcate its ideology while eliding the specificity of divisive issues. Indeed, in relation to the War, Andrew Lincoln argues that the periodical functioned "to reconcile readers to increasing military activity by providing them with fictionalized alternatives to the unsettling realities of war represented in the newspapers"

(Lincoln, 60). Since the Tory landed interest was particularly likely to back Sacheverell and to resent the cost of the War, one of Steele's most effective techniques was his humorous undermining of the Tory squirearchy, developing caricatures that act as a foil to his preferred model of politely improving and implicitly Whiggish conversation (*Tatler*, ed. Bond, vol. I.xxi–xxiii). In *Tatler* no. 86, for instance, Bickerstaff endures a visit by old friends from his native Staffordshire, led by Sir Harry Quickset. For a man to be named after a hedge does not bode well; and Bickerstaff describes how he "met him with all the Respect due to so reverend a Vegetable; for you are to know, that is my Sense of a Person who remains idle in the same Place for half a Century" (no. 86, *Tatler*, ed. Bond, vol. II.43–6). The visitors are so hampered by old-fashioned rules of precedence that they cannot agree who should leave the room first: "We were fixed in this Perplexity for some Time, till we heard a very loud Noise in the Street; and Sir *Harry* asking what it was, I, to make 'em move, said it was Fire." They insist on ale (not tea) in the morning, and refuse to drink in a coffee house that doesn't subscribe to John Dyer's by now markedly old-fashioned manuscript newsletter. After three bottles, a somewhat fuddled Sir Harry defers his business to the next day.

Strategically contrasted with this dysfunctional stereotype is Steele's idealization of proper rural authority:

> There is no Character more deservedly esteemed than that of a Country Gentleman, who understands the Station in which Heaven and Nature have plac'd him. He is Father to his Tenants, and Patron to his Neighbours, and is more superior to those of lower Fortune by his Benevolence than his Possessions. He justly divides his Time between Solitude and Company, so as to use the one for

> the other. His Life is spent in the good Offices of an Advocate, a Referee, a Companion, a Mediator, and a Friend. His Council and Knowledge are a Guard to the Simplicity and Innocence of those of lower Talents, and the Entertainment and Happiness of those of equal (no. 169, *Tatler*, ed. Bond, vol. II.432–33).

Like the monarch under Revolution principles, this is an authority figure who justifies his authority by his care for others; and Bickerstaff distinguishes him, by implication, from squires who, in line with his pejorative view of Tory ideology, are merely "Salvages, that know no Use of Property but to be Tyrants; or Liberty, but to be unmannerly".

For Johnson, the benevolent exercise of power and influence was evidently a source of pleasure: he describes to his wife in 1727 his success at Lincoln Assizes in negotiating "only the small Fine of a Marke a Piece" on "my poor Riotous Neighbours" (apparently "the Merry Wives of Spalding", now "delivered from this Tribulation, which I hope will be a Warning to them") (*Corr. SGS*, 37–38). He expresses his happiness at this "Opportunity of being of Service to my poor Neighbours in distress which is the truest pleasure I think a Rational Man can have". As a moderate Whig whose family had supported Parliament in the Civil War, Johnson conceived his role very much in line with the ideals proclaimed by the *Tatler*. Like the *Tatler* too, in whose pages political identification is muted, and Whigs and Tories move at least potentially – if with some shading of coded satire – within the same imagined social space, SGS enacted a conversation between party positions, as well as between different ranks, professions, and religious identities, that reflected a desire to put aside the bitter divisions of the past.

This aspiration may have been the easier to pursue in Spalding for the fact that the town had sustained much less damage in the Civil War than other Lincolnshire towns

(Clarke, 45). Indeed, Johnson's family had recently re-established intimate links with previously royalist local families. Johnson's father, the first Maurice Johnson (1661–1747), had first married a cousin from Pinchbeck, Jane Johnson, whose father, John Johnson, had in 1658 bought Ayscoughfee Hall in Spalding from John Walpole, a Catholic and one of Spalding's few royalists (Clarke, 9). He married, as his second wife, Elizabeth Oldfield, a daughter of Anthony Oldfield, another of Spalding's leading Royalists, who had been appointed Lord Lieutenant of the county after the Restoration (Clarke, 28, 58); and his son, Maurice Johnson the founder of SGS, would marry the daughter of her sister Mary, Elizabeth ("Betty") Ambler (1690–1754) (Nichols, VI.24–25). Their relation Antony Oldfield (b. c.1710), a land agent who acted for the Duchess of Somerset at Petworth, would in 1746 become a member of SGS, and he would write to Johnson not only to enquire about family connections, but also to share antiquarian curiosities, including matters relating to the Civil War and Restoration (*Corr. SGS*, 173, 178, 234–5). The Civil War turned out, in effect, to have been a bitter but temporary disruption to long-standing patterns of gentry sociability and intermarriage.

At the Revolution, in 1688, "All the gentry of the county" had indeed united to welcome William of Orange, offering "unanimous thanks for his protection and assistance of the true Protestant interest"; and Johnson's father served as captain in the militia in the 1690s (Clive Holmes, 253). Johnson's own attachment to Revolution principles as demonstrated in the SGS archives is cheerfully loyal and uncontroversial. Although he is interested in compiling the history of electoral politics in Lincolnshire, he gives little sign of any taste for current controversy: he writes happily in 1734, for instance, of a family evening spent "with Quadrille and Rost Oranges and wine" to

celebrate the marriage of George II's daughter Princess Anne to the Prince of Orange (having previously described the elaborate civic celebrations staged in Lincoln — unfortunately, as it turned out, on the wrong day).[29] Other SGS members seem to have taken a similar line: Timothy Neve, for instance, writes with pleasure of dining at Walpole's Houghton in 1729, and Stukeley, despite an early flirtation with Tory views, was by the 1720 a moderate Whig, who also enjoyed a visit to Houghton, where he tasted pineapple for the first time (*Corr. SGS*, 44–45). Somewhat more controversially, the Calvinist Grantham MP Sir Richard Ellys (1682–1742) prided himself on his descent from "the great Hambden, Libertatis Vindex" (John Hampden, 1571–1643), and commissioned a print of his ancestor which he presented to SGS (*Corr. SGS*, 116). Another controversial Whig figure invited to join the Society was Richard Bentley, formerly master of Spalding Grammar School, and now Master of Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, where he had long been embroiled in public warfare with the Fellows; but it appears from a visit Johnson made him in 1740 that he was tardy in making the book donation required of new members (*Corr. SGS*, 43, 130, 337). Indeed, in 1747 Sir John Clerk of Penicuik (1676–1755) saw the "Enquiries into all parts of Sciences" undertaken by SGS as a constructive application of energies that might otherwise have been turned to subversion, remarking, in the wake of the Jacobite rising, that "happy had it been for many of the subjects of G. Britain, if for these two years past they had been oblidged to employ their thoughts no other way" (*Corr. SGS*, 172–73, 225). The welcome that SGS gave to members from across a wide ideological range exemplified Steele's ideal of benevolent Whig modernity, and allowed members of

different views to unite around uncontroversial interests; but its ban on political and religious debate removed any threat to the status quo.

More fundamental even than party politics, however, were the structures of wealth and power that sustained the social world of which Johnson was part; and here both the *Tatler* and the SGS archives are much less explicit, though the implicit politics of their positions is clear. Clarke notes that, despite crown control of the manor, by the seventeenth century Spalding "was governed by its gentry, wealthy merchants and tradesmen, some of whom had legal training"; and she includes "the upwardly mobile Johnsons" in that category (Clarke, 14). The social role of landowner idealized in the country gentleman of *Tatler* no. 169 had, in effect, long been in tension with the need to make a profit from landholding, as Holmes demonstrates in his analysis of the seventeenth-century enclosures and engrossings that systematically reduced opportunities for Lincolnshire's commoners and smaller tenants (Clive Holmes, 21–7, 69–75). Yet in his judgment "the ideal of the landlord's social responsibility" could still "retain some force, serving to modulate landlord–tenant relations and preventing them from becoming exclusively dictated by the market". Steele's idealization effectively sidesteps the structural economic issues underlying gentry relationships with tenants and neighbours, issues intrinsically connected with the improving outlook that produced both Steele's conception of politeness and the landowners' and adventurers' enthusiasm for fen drainage. Johnson's vested interest as a specialist in the law of drainage was also strongly bound up with the ambitions of the major landowners of the district. He, like his father before him, served as steward of the manor of Spalding, which was in 1675 conferred on James Scott, Duke of Monmouth, and passed after his execution in 1685 to his widow,

Ann Scott, Duchess of Buccleuch (Clarke, 58). She was succeeded in 1732 by her grandson Francis Scott, 2nd Duke of Buccleuch, already an honorary member of SGS and a schoolfellow of Johnson's at Eton: Buccleuch, at this stage a Whig in politics (although he would turn against Walpole during the Excise crisis) became patron of the Society and a generous donor to its library.[30] Johnson formally thanks him for his "Goodness in Patronizing their Love for Literature Arts and Sciences" in "your Graces Seignioury where Arts & Sciences have ever had some Vogue & regard", and declares their ambition of "raising a Publick lending Library & storing & fixing a Musaeum". Yet despite his investment in the improving schemes of such landowners and his affinity with the protestant politeness advocated by the *Tatler*, he also concedes the damage done to his beloved antiquities in the cause of this modernity, writing enthusiastically of the monastic and aristocratic culture of Spalding in the middle ages, when "John of Gaunt . . . made frequent visits to this convent, with his brother Geffrey Chaucer, who married his lady's sister" (Nichols, VI.45–6). Indeed, Johnson speculated that Spalding "most probably . . . was the scene of action of that severest satire of Chaucer", "The Pilgrim's Tale". (Since disattributed, this sixteenth-century satire on monasticism begins "In lincolneshyr fast by the fene": a pilgrim going to Walsingham breaks his journey at an inn near "the greate buyldyng of this obbey /. . . sum thing in ruin").[31] In the succeeding dissolution of the monasteries, however, Johnson conceded that "Learning suffered more than the inconsiderate can imagine or the prejudiced will acknowledge".[32] Other SGS members, however, were reportedly less enthusiastic about their supposed Chaucerian heritage and more interested in the claims of present improvement: "they think it somewhat Preposterous, to found modern politeness upon an antiquated Author".[33]

The improvement of the fen was a crucial issue that underlay both the prosperity and the problems of the region. Johnson was also steward of Kirton and Croyland (for the Cecils, Earls of Exeter, of Burleigh House, Stamford), of Croyland itself (for SGS member Major-General Sir Robert Hunter, Governor-General in Jamaica), and the manor of Hitchin (for SGS member William Bogdani).[34] After a century in which Charles I's enforcement of court-supported investments in enclosing and draining the fens had been vigorously resisted by fenland commoners whose traditional mixed economies of arable (featuring local specialities of hemp and flax), grazing, fishing, and wildfowling were under threat, much of the drainage work once envisaged was by the early eighteenth century clearly incomplete, unsuccessful, or, given the shrinkage of the peat following drainage, in continual need of maintenance and remodeling; and consequences for navigation into local ports were also a focus of concern.[35] Experts in drainage legislation had become increasingly important in a post-Restoration context where would-be drainers "had to look to parliamentary statute for legal authority for their operations" instead of to the Privy Council, as they had before the Civil War; but the stakes were now correspondingly higher, as they could now hope, if successful, to gain "an irrefrangible legal title" (see Clive Holmes, 226–27, 254–55). This did not imply an individual practitioner's automatic support for every scheme, and Johnson's professional correspondence with the Lincolnshire MPs in 1724–26 shows him deploring the "Arbitrary Practices of the Corporation of Adventurers" in relation to Bedford Level, and discussing a parliamentary petition by local gentry against the Adventurers (*Corr. SGS,* xvii, xxiv, 25–26; 32–33). To judge by the thanks he received from Major-General Robert Hunter for his care of Croyland property that had previously been "Nothing but

trouble and Expens" to him, Johnson was indeed an effective steward (*Corr. SGS*, 51). Yet however carefully SGS might seek to avoid party-political discussion, it is clear from a reading of the *Tatler* in its contemporary contexts that such improving enterprises worked inexorably to advance particular kinds of social and economic interests and to disadvantage others.

Similar points could be made about the vested interests of many other early members of SGS. Johnson's cousins Dr Walter Lynn and Dr John Lynn, though neither mechanics by profession, had a keen interest in the design of pumping engines, and Walter could, in a letter of 1721 from London, combine news of intriguing antiquities just discovered in Muscovy with discussions about pumping out water from a Newcastle coalmine (*Corr. SGS*, 21–22; 232). John Britain, master of Holbeach Free School and perpetual curate of Gedney Fen, revised William Stukeley's map of South Lincolnshire drainage (*Corr. SGS*, 24; 224). The celebrated John Perry undertook major river management projects for Peter the Great, and in 1716–19 closed the Dagenham breach on the Thames.[36] Preeminent in their profession, however, as also in their long association with SGS, were the father and son John Grundy the elder (1696–1748) and John Grundy the younger (1719–83).[37] John Grundy the elder, a land-surveyor and mathematician, had worked in Spalding for the Duke of Buccleuch, and established himself as an expert on drainage in the fens and throughout England. He is recorded as combining service to the lord of the manor, to the town and to SGS: "He surveyed the manor of Spalding; and made a plan of the town, having then lately surveyed the lordship for the Duke of Buccleugh, lord of the manor, as a present to the Society's Museum; to which he added perspective views of the public buildings."[38] His combination of skills was formidable:

for a meeting of the Society on 12 April 1733 he contributed mathematical problems with their solutions, "some Verses made by him on his projecting to dreyne y^{e} Fenns", and an illustrated talk on early modern English coins (a footnote records: "NB. This day Mr Grundy layd his Scheme (read here 1 March last) before y^{e} Adventurers)" (*Minute-Books*, ed. Owen, 11). In 1737 he wrote to Johnson about his scheme for the Dee at Chester, detailed the improvements he had made to excavating machinery, and described his "Experiments by trying what weights will separate the Power of Cohesion in any given Cube of Earth" towards "a Universal Theorem, to make Banks of any manner of Different Strata's of Earth to Resist and overcome any given Pressure" – and mentioned in passing that "I am likewise writing a Manuscript of Algebra for the Benifit of my son."[39] This range of accomplishment suggests how closely idealizing improvement and economic transformation ran together through the particular kind of sociability that SGS promoted.[40] His son, who established himself permanently in Spalding, also maintained an active role in SGS, reporting, for example, on discoveries of Roman coins and pavements: his career would involve drainage projects throughout the east of England, and in 1771 he became a founder member of the Society of Civil Engineers, moving deftly into a further new formation of professional sociability (*Corr. SGS*, 128, 126, 228).

Sociability, so foundational to the ideology of SGS, was also, by its alleged absence, a traditional complaint against the traditional fenland commoners who opposed the drainage schemes that threatened their livelihoods. They were typically represented as deprived of regular work and church attendance, and cut off from the conformity to economic imperatives on which the post-Revolution world came increasingly to insist.[41] The 1699 pamphlet *Strange news from the Fenns* depicts instead a distinctively

threatening form of sociability, declaring that “a [p]owerful and tumultuous riot, near Spalding in Lincolnshire” had been organized under cover of “a pretended foot-ball play” (Lindley, 232). What was at stake was property and its use, whether for traditional subsistence or improving investment.

V. Improving Conversation

The very different model of sociability embraced by SGS can, at one level, be represented as very close to the *Tatler*’s ideal: the members enter into “a sociable way of conversing”, and, their minds being “bent towards their own improvement in knowledge”, they go on enjoying the *Tatler*s, and later, the *Spectator* and its successors, “and now and then a poem, letter, or essay, on some subjects in polite literature” (Nichols, VI.58–59). The *Tatler* presented a pervasive revaluation of social and family relationships, not as dull and oppressive alternatives to the glamour of unfettered appetite, but as attractive opportunities, and Steele places both commerce and family life within this ideal. Commerce, for instance, comes about because “The happiest Climate does not produce all Things; and it was so ordered, that one Part of the Earth should want the Produce of another, for uniting Mankind in a general Correspondence and good Understanding” (no. 92, *Tatler*, ed. Bond, vol. II.75). A family life characterized by mutual appreciation makes even the bachelor Bickerstaff regret his childlessness; and when he describes the deathbed of the mother of the family, a correspondent writes that he “has wept over” this particular piece “with great pleasure”, and claims that the influence of the *Tatler* has been so great in his locality that the squire has entirely reformed, despite having spent his entire previous life in drinking and hunting: “he has

sold his Dogs, shook off his dead Companions, looked into his Estate, got the Multiplication-Table by Heart, paid his Tithes, and intends to take upon him the Office of Churchwarden next Year" (no. 95, *Tatler*, ed. Bond, vol. II.88; no. 118, pp. 202–03). Even the *Tatler*'s most unpromising readers allegedly (if whimsically) find themselves impelled towards a constructive engagement with home and community.

Steele is indeed eager to establish conversation, rather than rank or wealth, as the essential criterion of sociable inclusion. Early in the *Tatler*'s run a country reader asks what Bickerstaff means by "a *Gentleman*", and Bickerstaff offers the definition a "Man of Conversation", as exemplified by Sophronius: he is "the Darling of all who converse with him, and the most Powerful with his Acquaintance of any Man in Town", "his Conversation is a continual Feast, at which he helps some, and is help'd by others, in such a Manner, that the Equality of Society is perfectly kept up, and every Man obliges as much as he is oblig'd", and "his Company [is] desir'd by Women, without being envy'd by Men" (no. 21, *Tatler*, ed. Bond, vol. I.164–67). With such a template to hand, it becomes clear which merchants are gentlemen and which are not: no. 25 distinguishes between Paulo and Avaro, the former whose hospitality declares "the Air of a Nobleman and a Merchant", the latter "one of the wealthiest Men in *London*, and liv'd like a Beggar" (no. 25, *Tatler*, ed. Bond, vol. I.196–97). However, the *Tatler* is also at pains to maintain boundaries, as in the sad case of Addison's Political Upholster, so obsessed with foreign news reports that he neglects his primary social duties: "He had a Wife and several Children; but was much more inquisitive to know what passed in *Poland* than in his own Family, and was in greater Pain and Anxiety of Mind for King Augustus's Welfare than that of his nearest Relations" (no. 155, *Tatler*, ed. Bond, vol. I.369). The

expansion of polite participation that Steele and Addison promote is indeed strategic and selective; and Johnson too would specify in 1712 that SGS was “a Clubb or Society of Gentlemen of all the Learned Professions”, while his son John would write that as far as societies like SGS were concerned, “Application & Industry rather furnish a Man with those Attainments that are most desirable than Birth or Riches” (*Corr. SGS*, 3–4, 165). This is echoed by the epitaph composed for John Grundy the elder: “without the advantage of a liberal education, [he] had gained by his industry a competent knowledge in several sciences” (Nichols, VI.86). Even more remarkable was the rare promotion of SGS member and schoolmaster William Burwell: “he was a common labourer, servant to Mr. Lynn of Spalding; and, without any instruction, made a pack of cards, and drew pictures; and was afterwards advanced to Tyrrington school” (Nichols, VI.77). As a refugee, Stephen Lyon had also overcome early disadvantages to become Vicar and President of SGS and a pillar of the local establishment. Such members combined hard-earned professional advancement with an ability and willingness to contribute to improving conversation.

There was, however, one major way in which SGS sociability might be thought to fall short of the *Tatler*’s programme; for Bickerstaff repeatedly and explicitly addresses himself to his female readers, declaring with typically back-handed gallantry in his first number that “I resolve also to have something which may be of Entertainment to the Fair Sex, in Honour of whom I have invented the Title of this Paper” (no. 1, *Tatler*, ed. Bond, vol. I.15). SGS, however, restricted membership to men, like other clubs and societies whose appeal Clark attributes in part to the increasing participation of women in this period in other forms of sociability (Clark, 190–91). SGS did, admittedly, aspire to a

form of masculine sociability that was markedly more compatible with newer norms of polite mixed society than the hard drinking, field sports, whoring, and political and religious quarreling caricatured by the *Tatler* as the preferred recreations of the traditional squirearchy – even in a century when many clubs and societies continued to emphasize the drinking and gambling that SGS was keen to avoid (Clark, 225). Intriguingly, however, the SGS archive also shows members explicitly considering female participation. One of the earliest members, Francis Curtis, headmaster of nearby Moulton Grammar School, suggested a group subscription for new books and pamphlets, with "due regard . . . to the Ladys that are lovers of Learning" (*Corr. SGS*, 6; 225). William Draper went so far as to place gender alongside religion and politics as an unwelcome source of division, concluding that "The Arts & Sciences have always been of all Ages, Sexes & Opinions" (*Corr. SGS*, 255–56, 226). Johnson certainly shared the *Tatler*'s sense of women's contribution to sociability, and speculated in a letter to Stukeley about the possibility of opening SGS membership to them:

> And I am so much of my Countryman St Gilbert of Sempringhams Mind, that I would have a Mixture of Female Members, Women sweetening and softening our Rugged Sex and being capable of Musick and Poetry and all parts of the Arts of designeing and It's very rarely that at Such Meetings that are to relax the Mind from Business & Severe Studys that any thing Occurrs which They cannot enter into.[42]

But this rhetoric itself highlights the difficulty: SGS meetings, the archive suggests, were typically calculated less "to relax the Mind" than to advance relatively "Severe Studys" (which was already a disincentive, as Johnson lamented, to enthusiasts for politics and

gambling among potential male members).[43] When polite amusement was the order of the day, ladies were indeed invited – for instance, to the anniversary concerts that Johnson organized in collaboration with the parish church organist and SGS composer Musgrave Heighington (1680–1764). Again, the gallant rhetoric suggests the difficulty of progressing beyond speculative discussion of female membership, as Johnson's ode for 1739 conflates friendship with romantic love, beginning "To Love and Social Joys let's Sing!" and closing with Venus rising from the waves:

> From foaming Waves when Beauty Sprung
> Tritons with vocal Shells proclaimd
> Her charms, which every Lyre has Sung
> Thro Greece, & thro' Britannia fam'd:
> Where all who felt her Influence own'd her Sway
> Which (as our Sires) their Ofspring must Obey.[44]

His pleasure in female wit can also be inferred from the endorsement he wrote on an epigram sent by Bogdani, noting that it contained "Just reprehension by a witty Lady on a proud Motto VENI VIDI VICI assumed as poesy for a Wedding Ring" (*Corr. SGS*, 131). But membership of SGS evidently remained a different matter.

Yet at the most basic level, Johnson's wife Elizabeth ("Betty") was, though not a member herself, a fundamental support to SGS. Not everyone, after all, was keen to participate in such a demanding enterprise, and Johnson declared that "under God, I depend chiefly on the strength of my own children, and my near relations, whom I have taken care to train up to a liking of it from their infancy; and, I trust, will keep it up when I shall leave them".[45] Roger Gale made a similar point, sending "my best wishes to the

Society, and your own family, out of which so considerable a part of it is formed, that you seem to have taken care (as far as human prudence can go) of perpetuating your Institution to posterity" (*Corr. SGS*, 139–40). Elizabeth was indeed a prolific mother: according to her husband's nephew, Fairfax, she and Johnson produced "26 children, of whom 16 sat down together to his table"; and although daughters were not members, both sexes contributed to SGS.[46] According to Fairfax Johnson, "Mr. Johnson taught all his children to draw at the same time that he taught them to write", and his daughter Anne Alethea deployed her skills to illustrate the minute books (Nichols, VI.25; *Corr. SGS*, xxi). A letter from her married sister Jane Green also demonstrates impressive skills: she gives a systematic account of the major paintings at a historic home that she has visited, specifying the subject and manner of each picture, locating it in its room, and distinguishing what is "finely done" from what is "not worth Notice", remarking dismissively that "in the dineing room he has all his ancestors but they are mear Sinepost painting" (*Corr. SGS*, 157–58). This family letter was evidently felt to merit filing in the SGS archive.

As the daughter of the master of Spalding Grammar School, Betty Johnson herself seems to have been thoroughly at home in a learned milieu; and the archive suggests that she read many of the reports that flowed in. She controlled access to Johnson's collections in his absence, and when he wrote home he included his communications for SGS in his letters to her (*Corr. SGS*, xix, 91). Although personal material was usually removed before filing, one letter to "My Dearest" from 1740 survives in full (*Corr. SGS*, 125–26). It is an icy February, and having reached Stilton after "a very good and pleasant Journey hither", Johnson sums up the events of the day: at Cowbitt the sun "so bright as

to induce old Mr Malsom to sit at the door on a bench in the 90th Year of his Age whom we complimented on being so hearty"; at Croyland a visit to Mr Crawford, who was well, although his brother "is at Bath & paralytick"; at Eye villagers "returning from the execution of their Neighbour Elizabeth Wincely . . . for a Murther by herself premeditated to save paying a Small Summe due to the Poor man for Wages"; at Whittlesea "2 Horseraces runn smartly" on the frozen mere, "one for a Sadle . . . the Other for 8 Guineas". The warmth and detail of his engagement with everyone he meets and everything he sees not only suggests the powerful fit of this sociable, curious personality with the SGS project, but also indicates the continuity of these traits into his family life. Before subscribing the letter "Your most affectionat Husband Maur. Johnson junr." he adds, with an eye to the next SGS meeting, "you may be pleased to Send this to be communicated to the Gent. with myne and Bro. Services to the Society after You have read it". All this, however, still leaves Betty Johnson in a position very different from that of an admitted member.

A key comparison here is with the institutions of masculine scholarship on which SGS drew for influential elements in its membership. Unlike the model of sociability being developed by Steele and Addison (with which Johnson obviously had considerable sympathy), SGS was powerfully shaped by core members who were (also like Johnson) members of the Society of Antiquaries, or of the Royal Society, or of both.[47] SGS was thus shaped not simply to foster and refine sociability, which might on its own have strengthened arguments for the fuller involvement of women, but also to gather data and advance knowledge, predominantly in natural philosophy and antiquities, ambitions traditionally construed as masculine. Natural philosophy also conferred on

SGS clear connotations of modernizing improvement (though of a different kind from anything Steele would have approved), and Sweet argues that antiquarianism likewise placed its enthusiasts "in the camp of the Moderns" (Sweet, 3). (Indeed, in the light of Johnson's topic-based filing of SGS correspondence, his projected network of corresponding societies, and his recruitment of corresponding members for this "academy of Arts & Sciences" nationally and internationally, Diana and Michael Honeybone have described his project as "a form of early postal internet" (*Corr. Stukeley/Johnson*, 97). The volume of correspondence generated was such that Johnson was soon dividing the work with a second secretary (*Corr. SGS*, xvi).) This focus on active knowledge production rather than passive consumption, and specifically on natural philosophy and antiquities, set SGS decisively at odds with the programme of the *Tatler* and *Spectator*, and with its gallant promotion of women's contribution to sociability: as Sweet remarks, "like science, the study of antiquities was often perceived to be at odds with the gentlemanly ideal".[48] Addison contributes to the *Tatler* the satirical character of Sir Nicholas Gimcrack, Fellow of the Royal Society and harebrained collector of natural curiosities; and when he writes of numismatics in his *Dialogue upon the Usefulness of Ancient Medals*, he does so emphatically not as an antiquarian, but as a gentleman with an elegant taste for classical literature.[49] Johnson and such key SGS members as Stukeley and the Gales were committed to a different path, one less easily accommodated to the ideology of the *Tatler*; but it would in the end be this commitment that would ensure the transmission of SGS back into polite print.

VI. Gough, Nichols, and the Print Canon

It is clear that Johnson had a strategic rhetorical interest in linking the Society that he founded both to Steele's circle at Button's and to Steele's *Tatler*, and that there were significant resonances between Steele's agenda and the particular challenges and opportunities confronted by the improving professionals of the Lincolnshire fens. On some issues, notably conflicts over religion and land use, the sheer extremity of recent local experience highlights the ambition (not to say the tendentiousness) of Steele's evasive projections; and the comparison also highlights the vested interests at work in the SGS membership and in Johnson's shaping of the Society and its records. Yet at the same time, as suggested above, there were significant differences in outlook. While the *Tatler* (however questionable its gallantry) addressed itself to women as a key constituency, SGS did not at this point progress beyond speculation about female membership; and while the *Tatler* ridiculed scientific and antiquarian enthusiasms, both were strongly promoted within SGS. The *Tatler* may well have been, as Johnson represents it, a congenial and inspiring initial focus, but it was only one strand in the impressive range of ancient and modern reading matter discussed in SGS correspondence and purchased or donated by members for its library. Indeed Johnson's origin story itself, while stressing the role of the *Tatler*, also mentions "the *Gazette* and *Votes*", with their vital news of current affairs, and suggests members' wider interest in "a poem, letter, or essay, on some subjects in polite literature" (Nichols, VI.37, 58–59). Moreover, interested as the members may have been in London publications, they did not have to look so far for news and discussion: nearby Stamford, a major coaching link on the Great North Road, was from 1714 producing the *Stamford Mercury: Historical and Political Observations on the Transactions of Europe. The Whole being a Miscellany of various Subjects, Prose*

and Verse, a newspaper of aspirations far beyond the local and utilitarian; and the correspondence of Johnson and other SGS members demonstrates news-gathering and networking at social hubs such as the Lincoln assizes.[50]

The fact that both John Dunton's *Athenian Mercury* (1691–97) and Addison and Steele's *Spectator* (1711–14) purported to record the proceedings of a society of gentlemen suggests the potential appeal of this kind of authorization – or mock-authorization – of published information and opinion.[51] The Society of Antiquaries and the Royal Society, meanwhile, were prominent among actually existing associations that used publication series to disseminate their activities and achievements. SGS, however, relied instead on correspondence among its sister societies and other contacts, and had no such foothold in print culture. It subscribed for publications from the Society of Antiquaries and received copies of the Royal Society's *Philosophical Transactions*, but had no equivalent of its own; and the potential implications are spelled out in a letter of 1738 from Cromwell Mortimer, Secretary of the Royal Society (*Corr. SGS*, xv). Mortimer explains that the Royal Society has "order'd me to send the Philos. Transact. as they come out to your Society; and they desire you will favour us with a Transcript of your minutes . . . & then the most remarkable & useful things may be usher'd into the world in the Phil. Trans. which otherwise, as you print nothing yourselves, would always have lain dormant in your Registers" (*Corr. SGS*, 112). According to a complaint by Richard Gough prefaced in 1784 to his "An Account of the Gentlemen's Society at Spalding", Mortimer had himself undertaken to publish the history of the SGS in *Philosophical Transactions* for 1744, but, despite privileged access to the Minute Books, had failed to deliver, furnishing Gough with the occasion of producing his own account.[52]

Gough was well aware of the importance to such societies of appropriate exposure in print. A Fellow of the Royal Society since 1775, he had become Director of the Society of Antiquaries in 1771, overseeing and contributing to its journal *Archaeologia*: its very first issue had published reports by Maurice Johnson taken from the SGS archive.[53]

Gough was a relative outsider to SGS (though one extensively networked among its members) who would work on the history of SGS with a leading London publisher, and the results were very different from the strategic lightness of touch with which Steele had advanced the cause of modern politeness in the *Tatler*. Gough, "arguably the most single-minded antiquary of his day", found his scholarly vocation on a trip to Stamford and Croyland in 1756 (the year after Johnson's death); and he met the publisher John Nichols (1745–1826) in the early 1770s. Sweet points to "the undisputed place which a knowledge of history and antiquities held amongst the reading public" in the later eighteenth century, and it was this public interest that Gough and Nichols would develop (Sweet, 31). Nichols himself had been apprenticed to William Bowyer, the outstanding learned publisher of his generation, who had been a member both of the Society of Antiquaries and of SGS.[54] In Sweet's judgment Nichols "occupied a similar position to Gough in the antiquarian world as a focal point in a network of antiquaries"; and although "he lacked Gough's expertise in scholarship", he was "the main antiquarian publisher and the editor of the *Gentlemen's Magazine*" and, as such, "a highly regarded source of information, advice and patronage" (Sweet, 63). By 1780 Gough and Nichols would be engaged on their most ambitious project, Gough's eight-volume *Bibliotheca Topographica Britannica*, which Nichols published in 52 numbers between 1780 and 1790; and it was this work that would enshrine SGS in British antiquarian lore.

Research for the account of SGS had commenced in earnest by 1781, when Gough wrote to Robert Uvedale, vicar of Parham, near Spilsby in Lincolnshire, "a valuable Correspondent in the Gentlemen's Magazine" (Nichols, VI.123). Uvedale provided some contact information, but reported that SGS appeared to be no longer active. (In fact, SGS was still meeting as a discussion and book club until at least 1800, as its treasurers' minutes and library loan book attest, but was not maintaining the Minute Books – nor is it clear that it still pursued its former scientific and antiquarian programme.) Having received Uvedale's report, Gough approached Fairfax Johnson, nephew of Maurice Johnson, who invited Gough and Nichols to Spalding in 1782 and 1783; and these visits "led to the most satisfactory and unreserved communication of the Minute Books" (Nichols, VI.124–25). Nichols published Gough's "An Account of the Gentlemen's Society at Spalding" in 1784 as no. 20 of *Bibliotheca Topographica Britannica*; and in 1790, when title pages and instructions to binders were issued for the whole work, no. 20 took its place at the beginning of vol. III, "Antiquities in Lincolnshire".[55] In his account Gough concedes that SGS is no longer functioning on "its original more extended plan", but explains that its present representatives "wish to revive it as a philosophic and experimental Society" (Nichols, VI.4). In July 1786, however, a much less sanguine view was given in a letter from "R. D." in the *Gentleman's Magazine*: R. D. reported that "the Society is now in a state of dilapidation", described the poor state of its collections, and expressed a wish to see them auctioned or donated to "a public or private museum".[56] It is not impossible that Gough, himself a frequent contributor of such antiquarian notes, had written or procured the letter himself in order to bring the issue to the attention of a wider audience of polite readers; but he responded

in tactful terms by lamenting the decline of SGS as an instance of "the natural mutability of all sublunary undertakings", and noting the health problems of Johnson's surviving son, Colonel Maurice Johnson, which made him, in contrast with the "affability and readiness of communication" of his nephew Fairfax Johnson, "an incommunicable, inaccessible man" – and, by implication, an obstacle to the revival of the Society whose premises and collections had devolved to his care (Nichols, VI.161–62). As Honeybone records, over its long history "the SGS has experienced surges of activity and development, alternating with times of comparative decline", and when Colonel Johnson died in 1793, a period of regrouping and refocusing ensued (Honeybone, "Three Hundred Years", 3).

The state of SGS described by R. D. contrasted painfully with Gough's earlier celebration of the Society as part of the "progress of Literature" (in the broad and miscellaneous sense then current), which he distinguished as "one of the interesting parts of History".[57] SGS would, in the event, change and survive; and after Gough's death in 1809 his "Account" too would gain a new lease of life when Nichols republished it (with some omission, some additional information, and notes on the account's composition and textual transmission) in vol. VI of *Literary Anecdotes*. Nichols's series again highlighted in its title the notion of national progress, promising "an Incidental View of the Progress and Advancement of Literature in this Kingdom during the Last Century"; but there were also important differences (Nichols, title; VI.1–162). *Bibliotheca Topographica Britannica*, an antiquarian product of the 1780s, was an eight-volume work in large quarto, designed to fill an imposing eighteen inches of shelf-space in a gentleman's library. In comparison, the more compact *Literary Anecdotes* comprised seven octavo

volumes that took up no more than a foot; and even after Nichols had added two more volumes to accommodate readers' further suggestions, it maintained its relatively comfortable and unassuming scale. Moreover, while the two projects had signaled topographical antiquities and literary history as their respective concerns, Nichols seems to have judged that SGS qualified as well under contemporary understandings of literature as of topography; and although *Literary Anecdotes* was still a densely footnoted antiquarian compilation, it had the effect of bringing SGS into a declaredly literary work (if by modern standards a highly miscellaneous one) that became a standard point of reference. Among other benefits, it furnished a permanent reminder of a claim to fame that local elites would prove loath to see extinguished.[58]

Johnson had used the *Tatler* not only to focus the early meetings of SGS, but also, in his narrative of the Society's origins, to connect it advantageously with his admired friend's influential formulation of polite sociability. Yet the differences that distinguish the SGS project from the *Tatler* are crucial, notably the commitment of SGS to scientific and antiquarian learning, and its long-term persistence as an exclusively male society. Towards the end of the *Tatle*r's run, in September 1710, Mr Bickerstaff had indeed reported the death of the virtuoso Sir Nicholas Gimcrack, in whose hapless person Addison had caricatured the virtuoso pursuits of antiquarian and scientific collection and enquiry: in the end, Gimcrack's widow is left trying to dispose of a miscellaneous accumulation of implicitly worthless specimens (no. 221, *Tatler*, ed. Bond, vol. III.153–56). The SGS's attempted union of literary, antiquarian, and scientific interests had also proved unsustainable beyond its founder's lifetime; but Gough's shaping of the account disseminated in *Literary Anecdotes* turned out to have considerable staying power,

conferring on Johnson's ambitious programme a permanent presence in the history of polite sociability – a presence particularly valuable during periods when the SGS archives themselves were less readily accessible.

In the twenty-first century SGS continues as a society focused on social meetings and a general interest lecture programme, with women finally admitted to membership in 2007 (Honeybone, "Three Hundred Years", 6). Given the *Tatler*'s dismissive attitude to antiquarianism and natural philosophy, and its highlighting of women among its imagined readers, Bickerstaff might well have counted this transformation among the triumphs of improving sociability.

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[1] I am grateful to Diana and Michael Honeybone and to Matthew Sangster for their generous assistance in the preparation of this paper.

[2] John Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century; Comprising Biographical Memoirs of William Bowyer, Printer, F.S.A. and many of his Learned Friends; an Incidental View of the Progress and Advancement of Literature in this Kingdom during the Last Century; and Biographical Anecdotes of a Considerable Number of Eminent Writers and Ingenious Artists; with a Very Copious Index*, 9 vols. (1812–15).

[3] The key editions of SGS correspondences are *The Correspondence of the Spalding Gentlemen's Society 1710–1761*, ed. Diana Honeybone and Michael Honeybone, The Lincoln Record Society 99 (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2010; hereafter *Corr. SGS*), and *The Correspondence of William Stukeley and Maurice Johnson*, ed. Diana Honeybone and Michael Honeybone, The Lincoln Record Society 104 (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2014; hereafter *Corr. Stukeley/Johnson*). See also David Boyd Haycock, 'Johnson, Maurice (1688–1755)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Sept 2010 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14908, accessed 2 Oct 2015]; and, for the recent expansion of access to and publication from SGS archives, see Michael Honeybone, "Three Hundred Years of a Lincolnshire Archive: The Spalding Gentlemen's Society", *Annual Bulletin of Historical Literature* 2–7, The Historical Association, 2013. For current SGS activities, see http://www.spalding-gentlemens-society.org/, and for planned online publication of the eighteenth-century minute books, *Corr. Stukeley/Johnson*, xii, xiv.

[4] Richard Gough, *Bibliotheca Topographica Britannica*, 52 parts in 8 vols. (1780–90: No. 20 (1784), which first presented the SGS material, was designed as the first item in vol. IV, "Antiquities in Lincolnshire". Quotations are, unless otherwise stated, from Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes*, vol. VI.37, 58–9. For early rules of SGS, see *The Minute-Books of The Spalding Gentlemen's Society, 1712–1755*, ed. Dorothy Owen, with the help of S. W. Woodward, The Lincoln Record Society 73 (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1981), x–xi.

[5] Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580–1800: The Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 26.

[6] *Corr. SGS*, xii; SGS Minute Book 1, fol. 16.

[7] For the origins of the Commission of Sewers, see H. C. Darby, *The Draining of the Fens*, Cambridge Studies in Economic History, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 1–5, and for Johnson's letters on drainage issues, *Corr. SGS*, xxiv and *passim*.

[8] *Corr. Stukeley/Johnson*, xxii; *Corr. SGS*, xii; SGS Minute Book 1, fol. 16.

[9] Clive Holmes, *Seventeenth-Century Lincolnshire*, History of Lincolnshire VII (Lincoln: History of Lincolnshire Committee, 1980), 5.

[10] Rosemary Sweet, *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 45, 49.

[11] Clark, *British Clubs*, 40. See Alan Downie, "The Myth of the Bourgeois Public Sphere", in *A Concise Companion to the Restoration and Eighteenth Century*, ed. Cynthia Wall (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 58–79, critiquing Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. T. Burger (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989; originally published 1962). For coffee houses, see Markman Ellis, *The Coffee House: A Cultural History* (London: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 2004), and Brian Cowan, *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffeehouse* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), *passim*.

[12] Michael Honeybone, "Spalding Gentlemen's Society (*act.* 1710–1770)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, May 2013 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/theme/59225, accessed 3 January 2014].

[13] Isaac Bickerstaff was Swift's supposed author of *Predictions for the Year 1708* (1708), subsequently taken up by Steele. For an overview of scholarship on the *Tatler*'s ideology, see Andrew Lincoln, "War and the Culture of Politeness: The Case of *TheTatler* and *The Spectator*', *Eighteenth Century Life* 36 (2012), 60–79. Johnson had Bickerstaffs among his ancestors (*Minute-Books*, ed. Owen, viii).

[14] *Corr. SGS*, xii; SGS Minute Book 1, fol. 16.

[15] *Corr. SGS*, xiii, 129; Caxton (near the Earl of Oxford's estate at Wimpole, and the late twentieth-century new town of Cambourne) and Stilton (south of Grantham, and a noted distribution centre for East Midlands cheese) are both on major roads to London. For sending books by water and luggage by wagon, see *Corr. SGS*, 119, 185.

[16] No. 1, *The Tatler*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), vol. I.15–16; *Corr. Stukeley/Johnson*, 98, 168.

[17] No. 71, *Tatler*, ed. Bond, vol. I.494 (and for the genuineness of letters printed, see no. 91, vol. II.71); no. 88, vol. II.53.

[18] Geoffrey Holmes, *The Trial of Doctor Sacheverell* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1973).

[19] No. 142, *Tatler*, ed. Bond, vol. II.310. Clive Holmes, *Seventeenth-Century Lincolnshire*, 261;Geoffrey Holmes, *Trial*, 240, 251-2.

[20] For the Civil War in Lincolnshire, see Clive Holmes, *Seventeenth-Century Lincolnshire*, 141–76; for Spalding's particular experience, and for the role of Robert Ram, see Rose Clarke, *Spalding 1625–1660: A Fair Town in a World Turned Upside Down* (Spalding: Rose Clarke, 2006), *passim*.

[21] *Divers Remarkeable Passages of Gods Good Providence in the Wonderfull Preservation and Deliverance of John Harington Esqu., Mr. Robert Ram minister, Mr. William Sclater, and Serjeant Horne, all of Spalding in the county of Lincoln who were taken prisoners by the Cavaliers of Croyland and kept there the space of five weekes: but are now lately rescued by the Parliaments forces, the town taken with little losse, the forenamed prisoners set at liberty, and many of their adversaries taken in the same net they layd for others: whereunto is annexed a copy of a letter sent by Mr. Ram to Croyland, which they pretended to be the cause of that their madnesse against him* (1643); Clarke, *Spalding 1625–1660*, 29–30.

[22] Robert Ram, *A Sermon Preached at Balderton March 27. 1646* (1646); Robert Ram, *The Souldiers Catechisme: Composed for the Parliaments Army* (2nd edn, 1644), 16–17; Clarke, *Spalding 1625–1660*, 38.

[23] Clarke, *Spalding 1625–1660*, 53–5; *The Letter Book of Sir Anthony Oldfield, 1662–1667*, ed. P. R. Seddon, The Lincoln Record Society 91 (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2004), xxxii–xxxiii, 56–62.

[24] Valerie Rumbold, "Burying the Fanatic Partridge", in *Politics and Literature in the Age of Swift: English and Irish Perspectives*, ed. Claude Rawson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 106–09.

[25] Grave slab in the parish church of St Mary and St Nicholas, Spalding.

[26] *Corr. SGS*: Walpole, 104, 238; the two Samuel Wesleys, 42, 56–57, 61, 328–29; Jennens, 176, 230; Ault, 32.

[27] *Corr. SGS*, xii; SGS Minute Book 1, fol. 16.

[28] Alexander Pope, *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, lines 193–214, in *Imitations of Horace*, ed. John Butt, vol. IV of *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. John Butt and others, 11 vols. (London: Methuen, 1939–69), 109–11.

[29] *Corr. SGS*, 22; 88–89, 167. For wider interest in the Prince's visit see pp. 85, 87.

[30] For the Duke of Buccleuch, see *Corr. SGS*, 69, 113–15 (and for hopes that he might endow a museum for SGS, p. 73); for the Cecils' dominance of nearby Stamford, see Clive Holmes, *Seventeenth-Century Lincolnshire*, 35–36.

[31] *The Court of Venus*, ed. Russell A. Fraser (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1955), 82–3.

[32] For the potential appeal of antiquarianism both to Whigs and to Tories, see Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 78–9; Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes*, vol. VI.37–55 (p. 46).

[33] Timothy Neve to Johnson, 1717, *Corr. SGS*, 16–17.

[34] *Corr. SGS*: for correspondence from Hunter relating to drainage, p. 38; for Bogdani, pp. 224, 229.

[35] For traditional crops, see Clarke, *Spalding 1625–1660*, 12; for the hopes of profit that underlay seventeenth-century investment in enclosure and drainage projects, the resources traditionally relied upon by commoners, and the consequences of seventeenth-century drainage, see Darby, *The Draining of the Fens*, 23–116; for rising population in the seventeenth century, and fenland commons as an inducement to migration, see Clive Holmes, *Seventeenth-Century Lincolnshire*, 19–21; for seventeenth-century court-backed schemes (particularly under the personal rule of Charles I), commoners' resistance, and the limited eventual success of such schemes during the Civil War and beyond, see Clive Holmes, *Seventeenth-Century Lincolnshire*, 121–30, 153–56, 208–12, and Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, *passim*.

[36] *Corr. SGS*, 101; John H. Appleby, "Perry, John (1669/70–1733)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, January 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21997, accessed 19 September 2014].

[37] *Corr. SGS*, 228; A. W. Skempton, "Grundy, John (*bap.* 1719, *d.* 1783)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, October 2005 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/47144, accessed 19 September 2014].

[38] Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes*, vol. VI.86. Francis Scott, 2nd Duke of Buccleuch, had succeeded his mother in 1732, the year of Grundy's *A Plan of the Town of Spalding in South Holland Lincolnshire*, reproduced in *Corr. SGS*, fig. 2, p. 206. See also *Corr. Stukeley/Johnson*, xxv; *Minute-Books*, ed. Owen, 8–11.

[39] *Corr. SGS*, 100–101; and, for associated correspondence, 103–04.

[40] For further instances of the skills and knowledge displayed, see *Minute-Books*, ed. Owen, xiii–xvi.

[41] For disparaging comments from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, see Darby, *The Draining of the Fens*, 58, 90, 112–13, 174; Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, 1–22.

[42] See *Corr. Stukeley/Johnson*, 75. Gilbert of Sempringham, also in Lincolnshire, founded the Gilbertine Order, whose houses unusually included both women and men.

[43] Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes*, vol. VI.9. For the "highly gendered" world of antiquarianism, see Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 69–78.

[44] *Corr. SGS*, xviii, 119–21. Roger Gale comments on the ladies' enjoyment, p. 124. For further concerts attended by ladies, see *Minute Books*, ed. Owen, xii–xiii.

[45] *Corr. SGS*, 260–61; for a current appraisal, see *Corr. Stukeley/Johnson*, xxxi.

[46] Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes*, vol. VI.25. Eleven children are detailed in the Honeybones' family tree (*Corr. SGS*, 260–61).

[47] For the overlapping interests of the two, see Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 8–11.

[48] For Addison's critique of antiquarianism as pedantry, see Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 4–5, and for parallel disapproval of science and antiquarianism, p. 8.

[49] No. 216, *Tatler*, ed. Bond, vol. III.132–35; no. 221, pp. 153–56; Joseph Addison, *Dialogues upon the Usefulness of Ancient Medals. Especially in Relation to the Latin and Greek Poets* (1726); Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 14.

[50] Celebrated as the oldest continuously published newspaper in Britain, the *Stamford Mercury* continues as a local newspaper: for the extensive archive curated by the Stamford Mercury Archive Trust and images of early issues, see http://www.stamfordmercury.co.uk/news/features/mercury-archives (consulted 7 July 2015).

[51] Gilbert D. McEwen, *The Oracle of the Coffee House: John Dunton's Athenian Mercury* (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1972), points out that the Athenian Society, so called, was not part of Dunton's original formula, but was adopted after being invoked in responses by Swift and Gildon (p. 24); Bond suggests that the members of the Spectator Club, despite being given "an elaborate introduction" by Steele, "fail to play any very lively role as contributors or stimulants to conversation in subsequent numbers" (*The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), xxxii–xxxv).

[52] Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes* , vol. VI.2–3; for the first appearance of Gough's account in *Bibliotheca Topographica Britannica* (1784), see n. 4 above.

[53] E.g. "A Letter from Maurice Johnson Esq; to Mr. New, relating to the Registers of the Bishops of Lincoln", *Archaeologia* 1 (1770), 30.

[54] For Bowyer, see *Corr. SGS*, 154.

[55] This is the order prescribed in the directions to the binder, which makes sense of the claim that no. 20, the history of SGS, serves as introduction to the *Reliquiae Galesianae* in no. 2. The *Reliquiae* comprise the papers of Roger and Samuel Gale, SGS members whose correspondents include Maurice Johnson. This order is not followed in the copy of vol. III inscribed to Gough by Nichols and further annotated by Gough (Bodleian Library Gough Gen. top. 105), which begins instead with no. 2.

[56] "Memoirs of the Spalding Society", *Gentleman's Magazine*, lvi.560 (1786). There is no evidence in Emily Lorraine de Montluzin, *Attributions of Authorship in the Gentleman's Magazine, 1731–1868: An Electronic Union List* (http://bsuva.org/bsuva/gm2/index.html) to confirm that Gough was the author. (Since the index of pseudonyms in this resource is not currently accessible online, I am grateful to the author for providing this information.)

[57] Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes*, vol. VI.1; Sweet, *Antiquaries*, xiv. See 'literature, n.', sense 1, *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2015 [http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/109080?redirectedFrom=literature, accessed 24 July 2015].

[58] For the antiquarian preference of documentary footnotes to elegant narrative, see Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 6–7.